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Eighteenth Century English Life Annuities: Calculations and Applications

The first life annuity evaluation in England was done by Edmund Halley in 1693 related to his construction of the Breslau life table. The work had little impact until Abraham De Moivre published his work on life annuities in 1725. After that point several English mathematicians, most notable among them Thomas Simpson, became interested in life annuity valuations. The topic is covered from two perspectives. First, some eighteenth century annuity tables have been recalculated to try to discover the author's intentions and mistakes, if any. The second thread of enquiry is to try to answer the question why books on annuities were published by mathematicians when some modern historians have doubted whether they were ever used in practice.